Samuel Fothergill's

SERMON

On the 19th of the 11th Month, 1769.

2/-

BRITISH MUSEUM

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT

HORSLEY-DOWN,

LONDON,

The 19th of the 11th Month, 1769.

By *Samuel Fothergill.*

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BRITISH MUSEUM

A SERMON.

A SOLEMN ſummons which the Almighty gave, through his prophet Joel, to a people whom he had owned above all the families of the earth, at a time when they had revolted and departed from him, has been revived in my mind, with an apprehenſion that the ſame authority requires the republication of it in this day, to a people likewiſe highly favour'd of him, and who have, in like manner, departed from their firſt love.

BLOW the trumpet in Zion, ſanctify a faſt, call a ſolemn aſſembly. Gather the people, ſanctify the congregation, aſſemble the elders; gather the children, and thoſe that ſuck the breaſt: Let the bridegroom go forth of his chambers, and the bride out of her cloſet: Let the prieſts, the miniſters of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them ſay, ſpare thy people, O Lord! and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the Heathen ſhould rule over them; wherefore ſhould they ſay among the people, Where is their God? Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people.

As

As I am about to conclude, perhaps finally conclude, my labours among you in this quarter ; I would query with ſome, with many that are preſent, whether they have not heard, intelligibly, the ſound of the trumpet, calling them, with a degree of certainty, to ariſe and prepare themſelves for the battle ?

My brethren and ſiſters, among whom I have been conſtrained, in the overflowings of the Father's love, to labour in a private capacity, breaking, I hope I may ſay, a little bread from houſe to houſe ; the everlaſting goſpel has been preached among you with all the force of pathetic energy, with all the tenderneſs of divine compaſſion : Let it not be ineffectual. The goſpel meſſage has been delivered with ſuch indubitable clearneſs, that your judgments have been convinced ; you have aſſented to the truth as it is in Jeſus : Suffer not the impreſſion it has made upon your minds to be ſpeedily eraſed.

Far, very far, be it from me to think highly of myſelf, to exalt the officer, the miniſter ; I would not that you ſhould hold any man's perſon in eſtimation ; I am deeply ſenſible that to me belongs bluſhing and confuſion of face : But I magnify mine office, and the Power of him who has ſeen meet to employ me therein. I would endeavour to exalt in your view the adorable goodneſs and condeſcenſion of the great author of all our mercies, in that he has cauſed the trumpet to be renewedly ſounded in your borders : Hear its important meſſage with ſuitable attention ; let it rouſe and prepare all the ranks in the armies of our Iſrael to engage in the glorious cauſe of our God : Let the daughters of our Zion ariſe from the bed of indolence, from the lethargic ſtupor of a fatal forgetfulneſs ; from all the deadening, benumbing gratifications

gratifications of ſenſuality, and ſhake herſelf from the duſt of the earth, that ſhe may come up to the help of him who hath called her with an high and holy calling.—The trumpet is blown in her ſtreets—the alarm has been heard by all :—O ! Let not its language be rendered unintelligible by the multiplicity of trivial things, that too much abſorb the minds of many. I am fully perſuaded, that the gracious viſitation of humbling, melting goodneſs has been afreſh extended to individuals preſent, in (I had almoſt ſaid a very memorable manner) nor will I recall the expreſſion ; for if it be not treaſured up in your remembrance now, for your profit and advantage, it will be memorable in that awful, approaching period, when every neglected mercy will appear deeply engraven, in a dread hand-writing on the wall, againſt us : Let me therefore tenderly entreat you with all the warmth of unutterable affection, as a brother, as a fellow-pilgrim, through the viciſſitude of time, to the unmixed joys of a happy eternity, that you will no longer neglect the offers of mercy, or turn a deaf ear to the reproofs of inſtruction.

I FEEL my mind covered with that boundleſs love, that wiſhes, that ardently deſires, you may indeed be wiſe for yourſelves ; for although I may be deficient in many qualifications of a goſpel miniſter, I am not wanting in that pure, diſintereſted love which ſeeks not yours, but you unto the Lord.

Blow the trumpet in Zion ; ſanctify a faſt.

IF we were but enough attentive to the ſound of the the trumpet, we ſhould ſee the abſolute neceſſity of this ſanctified faſt, a faſt from every of thoſe deluſive pleaſures

ſures and ſlaviſh attachments that render the mind inſenſible of good.

Call a ſolemn aſſembly.

This branch of the ſummons ſome may think belongs only to a few, and we have no ſhare in the duty it enjoins. I confeſs I am not of that opinion, I think every individual has a ſhare in the inſtruction couch'd in it.

Call a ſolemn aſſembly.

Oh, you active ones! Stop a while in your ſwift career, make a ſolemn pauſe: Stand collected from every object that can gratify or delight the ſenſual part: Labour diligently to aſſemble all the powers and faculties of the ſoul, that they may be ſanctified by him who gave them. I believe there is no uſeleſs, dead, unactive member in the church of God; and thoſe who can thus aſſemble the collected attention of a redeemed mind, devoted to the divine will, thoſe have an undoubted right from the higheſt authority to call an holy convocation. We can do nothing againſt the truth, but for the truth, was the language of ſome formerly, who had indeed ſanctified an acceptable faſt. I muſt deſire that thoſe who perhaps cannot be ſo active in promoting this glorious cauſe among the ſons of men, as ſome who are called into more eminent ſtations in the Church, may, by a circumſpect care, over all their words and actions, ſee that they do nothing againſt the truth.

Call a ſolemn aſſembly; gather the people.

How ſcattered are many of the members of this quarter? Scattered indeed, as ſheep without a ſhepherd, diſperſed

perſed up and down in the dark vale of inſenſibility, and ſelf-forgetfulneſs; many upon the barren mountains of an empty profeſſion; loſt to all religious fellowſhip, unacquainted with that holy union in which is the bond of peace. How many are the careleſs I have met with amongſt you, who, alas! it may be ſaid, care for none of thoſe things?—Oh! You elders, who might have been as pillars in the Lord's houſe: You delegated ſhepherds, who might have adorned the firſt ranks, in the armies of our Iſrael, if you had not ſet down and taken up a reſt ſhort of thoſe glorious abodes, which are prepared for them who ſteadily perſevere in the line of divine appointment!—To you the call is,

Gather the people.

Am I my brother's keeper? Let it ſuffice for me that I look to myſelf, and that my own family is in tolerable order, is a language that too much prevails. But Oh! that you had the cauſe of God more at heart; that you were more engaged to gather the people; that you might, with a fatherly care, overlook thoſe whoſe minds at preſent reſemble the barren deſart, the uncultivated wilderneſs; that you might comfort and encourage thoſe who tread the gloomy ſcenes of an adverſe allotment, as it were cut out from every joy, and alive to each painful ſenſibility. How would it comfort many of theſe, if an experienced friend was now and then to drop into their families, and at times ſpeak a word in the openings of divine wiſdom, ſuitable to their ſeveral ſtates? I believe it would be a great means of gathering the people. Why ſhould your care be circumſcribed within the narrow limits of your own families, although they might be well regulated? But you might be more extenſively uſeful if

thus engaged in the care of the houſehold of God: I am perſuaded that the divine wing would be over you, and a bleſſing would attend your labours. 'Tis not a time for us to dwell unconcerned in our ceiled houſes, when the houſe of God lies waſte; we have many of us the ſame tender connexions as you. I myſelf have the ſame endearing attachments as ſome of you, the ſame ties of domeſtic love as ſome of you, not leſs attentive to every relative and ſocial duty than ſome of you; my nature is not harſh, my principles much leſs ſo; yet I am made willing to leave all to come and labour with you, if ſo be I might be inſtrumental to rouſe any to a more arduous purſuit of their everlaſting intereſt, and I can freely acknowledge with humble thankfulneſs, that I never more fully experienced my peace to flow as a river, never could with greater joy ſay, Return O my ſoul to the place of thy reſt, for the Lord thy God hath dealt bountifully with thee, than when I have been thus engaged in extenſive private labours, viſiting the ſick, reviving the ſorrowful, encouraging the diſconſolate; ſtrengthening the weak, watching over and carefully admoniſhing the giddy, incautious youth; and I doubt not but you would have the rewards of peace in your own boſoms, if, as heads of the ſociety, you were more often thus employed in endeavouring to gather the people.

Sanctify the congregations; aſſemble the elders.

I HAVE been deeply concerned to ſee ſome of the elders ſo deficient in filling the line of divine appointment. If they were more engaged to aſſemble under the holy influence of that power in which they ſhould move, they would many of them be commanded to

Blow

Blow the trumpet in Zion.

But I know of no ſtate harder to ſpeak to, more difficult to reach, than that of an elder, whoſe mind is overgrown by the earthly nature.

Oh earth, earth, earth ! Hear the word of the Lord.

I don't recollect any other inſtance, in ſacred writ, where attention is demanded in a ſimilar manner.

Oh earth, earth, earth ! Thus thrice repeated, plainly ſignifying the great difficulty there is in reaching to thoſe, who are as it were buried in the earth, whoſe minds are fixed in it.

Gather the children.

You that have the riſing youth under your care, let me call upon you, let me entreat you to,—gather the children :--Gather them from all the bewitching, enticing allurements of the world ; gather their attention to that of God in their own minds. O! How have I ſecretly mourn'd to ſee the poor children ſo ſorrowfully neglected, ſo uninſtructed, ſo much eſtranged from that holy, divine principle which would exceedingly beautify and enrich them ? But, alas ! How few parents are rightly qualified to teach their children the law of divine love, to inſtill into their tender minds proper ſentiments, to cultivate upon them thoſe impreſſions that would be of everlaſting advantage ;—and if the children, when the gracious viſitation of the father of mercies moves upon their hearts, warming and animating them with the love of virtue ; raiſing the ſecret ſigh, and begetting deſires after heaven

and

and holineſs : I ſay, if the children ſhould then aſk the negligent parent, What is this ſecret ſomething which I feel ; this principle which impreſſes my mind with the love of virtue ? What is it ? What value ſhall I ſet upon it ? How then can you give them ſuitable inſtruction ? You cannot teach them obedience to its ſacred dictates, when your own example ſpeaks a language quite oppoſite ? Oh ! Why ſhould the ſea-monſter be brought againſt you ? " The ſea-monſter draweth forth the breaſt to the young, but the daughter of my people is become cruel as the oſtrich in the wilderneſs, that leaveth her eggs in the ſand, to be hatched by the beams of the ſun, and conſidereth not that the foot of the paſſenger may cruſh them."——The daughter of my people hath left her tender offspring to the uncertainty of being accidentally benefited, or, I ſhould rather ſay, to the mercy of God unaſked, unſought, expoſed to all the dangers of a dreary wilderneſs, unaided, unaſſiſted by the care of a natural parent ; the tongue of the ſucking child cleaveth to the roof of its mouth for thirſt ; the children aſk bread, and there is none, in many families, to break it ; they want to be nouriſhed by the ſincere milk of the word ; but, alas !

The daughter of my people is become cruel.

Oh you parents, you delegated ſhepherds ! What account will you have to render when the Lord of the whole earth ariſeth to make inquiſition for blood ? Bear with me my dear friends ; flattery and ſmooth tales may pleaſe fools, but they will not pleaſe him whom I deſire to ſerve in the goſpel of his ſon. All that is within me is moved while I thus earneſtly expoſtulate with you on behalf of the dear children ; ſuffer me to entreat you for God's ſake,

for

for your own ſoul's ſake, for the ſake of the cauſe of truth,

Gather the children, and thoſe that ſuck the breaſt.

Those who are filling themſelves with the world's conſolation, with the intoxicating pleaſures and amuſements of a degenerate age; wean them from thoſe delights: Gather them to the knowledge of themſelves, to a ſenſe of the mercies that are offered them by the great author of mercies, ancient and new.

While thy ſervant was buſied hither and thither, the man made his eſcape,—was the vain excuſe of the officer to whoſe cuſtody a certain captive was committed, with the charge, "Take care of this man till I come, and if thou let him go, thy life ſhall go for his life." No plea of other engagements, nor even want of ability to diſcharge our duty towards our offſpring, will ſtand us in ſtead, if when the Almighty queries with us,—What haſt thou done with thoſe lambs I left under thy care in the wilderneſs, thoſe tender offſprings I gave thee in charge?—We have through neglect, through unwatchfulneſs, ſuffered him or her to go; but we ſhall moſt certainly ſtand accountable for his or her life,—I ſaid want of ability, becauſe I aſſuredly believe, that want of ability will be ſo far from a palliation of our crime, that it will rather increaſe our condemnation. Can we plead want of ability to him who is always ready to furniſh us with it, if we are but willing to receive it at his hand? I am of opinion with reſpect to many of our youth, that if they had been properly inſtructed and carefully watched over, if they could have ſeen the beauty of holineſs ſhine in the example of their parents, they would not have gone out ſo widely as they have.

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O you parents of both sexes! An important duty is reposed in you. Example your children in the practice of piety. Example speaks louder than precept, its influence is far more extensive, and while on the one hand you are excited to a faithful discharge of your duty towards them, by the certain hope of a glorious reward; so on the other hand the powerful ties of natural affection, the warm solicitude for the happiness of those you love, must stir up to diligence in the work and *service appointed you.*

Gather the children.

If after your attentive care has been employed for their preservation; if after the forcible voice of example, you have called them to the perfecting of holiness in the fear of God, they will go, they will turn aside, into the by-ways & crooked paths of sin & iniquity, they must stand by their own choice. You will have redeemed your souls & will be found in your lots at the end of time. A ponderous crown awaits; you will close your eyes, and open them to the boundless fruition of unmixed joy, in a happy eternity. We do sometimes with sorrow observe the unwearied labours of a parent's love, bestowed without the desired effect: 'Tis mournful to see children pierce with bitterness and anxiety the breast that has been their support, in their infantile years; to fill that eye with sorrow, that has dropt over them the tear of maternal tenderness; 'tis a cruel thing for a child to mingle gall and wormwood in the cup of a parent descending to the grave! Let such be assured that their own portion of gall and wormwood will be doubly increased thereby, in the solemn hour of just retribution.

But Oh, beloved youth! I earnestly desire that you may

may never thus widely deviate from the paths of rectitude. 'Tis on you the hopes of the preſent age muſt ſhortly devolve: May you wiſely chuſe an early ſubmiſſion to the holy diſcipline of the croſs of Chriſt, that you may come up as an army for God. Conſider the uncertainty of your ſtay here: Conſider the important buſineſs of life, and let the love of every unprofitable delight be ſwallowed up in the arduous purſuit of glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life. We are daily inſtructed by the powerful, eloquent language of mortality. Death invades all ranks, ſnatches thoſe of all ages from the buſy ſtage of life.—She who was yeſterday ſurrounded with nuptial joys muſt, to-morrow, be confined within the cold incloſure of the ſilent grave.

"*Let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her cloſet.*"

LET the young be joyous, and thoſe who are in the bloom of life leave every thing that tends to retard their progreſs towards the city of the ſaints ſolemnity: Let them relinquiſh their moſt exalted ſatisfactions, rather than neglect to lay hold on the joys of God's ſalvation, which are unutterably more deſirable than all the ſin-pleaſing gratifications that this world can beſtow.

'*Let the prieſts, the miniſters of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar.*'

THIS ſhould not be confined to thoſe only whoſe mouths may be opened publicly amongſt you; for it belongs to all thoſe who preach to others by the regularity of a godly life and converſation, although we are favoured with a living miniſtry of divine appointment, who dare not

not fill the ears of men with a repetition of unfelt truths; nor amuſe them with the unprofitable productions of an empty mind; but are concerned to diſcharge themſelves faithfully, as ſtewards of the myſteries of God; yet let them be joined by all thoſe that mourn for the deſolation of Zion, by all who wiſh peace within her walls, and proſperity within her palaces.

Let us weep between the porch and the altar, ſaying,—Spare thy people, O Lord! And give not thy heritage to reproach, that the heathen ſhould rule over them; wherefore ſhould they ſay among the people,—Where is their God?"

If we are thus unitedly engaged in behalf of our Iſrael, it may be that the Lord will again be jealous over his land, with an holy jealouſy; for I cannot think that a people whom he has raiſed by his invincible power, and ſo ſignally placed his name amongſt, were ever deſigned to be only the tranſient glory of a couple of centuries.—I am ſtill revived by a ſecret hope of better times, when our Zion ſhall again put on her beautiful garments, and in her and with her ſhall ariſe judges, as at the firſt, and counſellors, as at the beginning. Let us weep between the porch and the altar; let us interceed for the people, that the land may yet be ſpared. The gracious ear of our heavenly Father is ſtill open to the ſupplications of his children, and I believe he will yet be jealous over his land, and pity his people.

The time approaches when the great daſher in pieces will more and more come up amongſt us; and may all, who are broken by him, wait to be healed by the ariſing of his love: I ſhall not live to ſee it, but I live in the faith, and I believe I ſhall die in the faith, that the Lord

of

of Hoſts will yet beautify the place of his feet, that our Zion will yet become an eternal excellency, and Jeruſalem the praiſe of the whole earth.

Let us weep between the porch and the altar, for the Lord will yet be jealous over his land, and pity his people.

THE bowels of adorable condeſcenſion yet yearn over his children, with all the tenderneſs of a Father's love.

How ſhall I give thee up, O Ephraim? How ſhall I make thee as Admah, and ſet thee as Zeboim?—How ſhall I cut thee off from being a people before me?

BY this moving and pathetic language would the great Father of the univerſe induce you to return to the arms of everlaſting mercy; and if we are placed as watchmen in Zion, faithfully diſcharge the truſt repoſed in us, we ſhall be made inſtrumental in gathering the ſcattered and diſperſed ſheep, from the eaſt and from the weſt, from the north and from the ſouth, to the great ſhepherd, to the one ſheepfold, and finally obtain an admittance into thoſe glorious manſions, where the morning ſtars join in ſinging hallelujahs! And where all the ſons of God for ever ſhout for joy.

Now unto the King eternal, immortal and inviſible, the only God, be honor and praiſe, for ever and ever!

F I N I S.

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